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Statement

by

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Director of Central Intelligence

before

United States Senate

Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations

With Respect to Intelligence Activities

16 September 1975

Mr. Chairman:

This hearing typifies the difficulty of modernizing our approach to intelligence in America. We are resolved that intelligence operations be conducted in America in conformity to our laws and Constitutional procedures. This does not mean that intelligence can have no secrets -- we have many secrets in America, from grand jury proceedings to the ballot box, where secrecy is essential or the process will not work.

We are engaged, in these investigations, Mr. Chairman, in resolving the dilemma between the necessary secrets of intelligence and the equally necessary exposure of our government's workings to our people and their representatives to ensure that they respond to the people's will. In former times, this contradiction was resolved in favor of almost total intelligence secrecy, which is at the base of President Kennedy's remark that intelligence failures are trumpeted, while the successes go unheralded.

As we lift this veil to open intelligence to the kind of public review and control we Americans want today, we have two problems. One is how far to go, on which we must jointly develop some guidelines and understandings, or we risk seriously and unnecessarily injuring our intelligence. The other is to ensure that our people have an accurate perception of what modern intelligence really is. Without this, an individual act is seen as the norm, in application of Aesop's fable of each blind man describing a whole elephant as only an extension of the part he perceives.

To this Committee, and its staff to date, we have tried to present

the whole of intelligence today, and not just its parts. I hope this whole will be the basis for the decisions we will reach as to the guidelines and supervision we want to establish for intelligence tomorrow. I thus ask for a suspension of final judgment until the whole picture of intelligence can be presented in its true proportions, good and bad, while we respond to your requirement of public exposure in this hearing of one portion of it. With other government functions like our Army or our welfare services, the whole is perceived and the individual act and even mistake is seen in proportion. In intelligence, we must modernize our perception of its whole contribution to our country while we ensure that it conforms with the standards we Americans expect. I hope we can do both jobs.

I.

The specific subject today concerns CIA's involvement in the development of bacteriological warfare materials with the Army's Biological Laboratory at Fort Detrick, CIA's retention of an amount of shellfish toxin and CIA's use and investigation of various chemicals and drugs.

The relationship between the CIA and the Army Biological Laboratory at Fort Detrick as an activity requiring further investigation surfaced in late April of this year. It resulted from information provided by a CIA officer not directly associated with the project in response to my repeated directives that all past activities which might now be considered questionable be brought to the attention of Agency management. Information provided by him and by two other officers aware of the project indicated

that the project at Fort Detrick involved the development of bacteriological warfare agents, some lethal, and associated delivery systems suitable for clandestine use.

A search was made for any records or other information available on the project. This search produced information about the basic agreement between the Army and the CIA relating to the project and some limited records covering its activities from its beginning in 1952 to its termination in 1970.

After the discovery of these project records, verification of the disposition of a stockpile of BW agents and toxins maintained by Fort Detrick for possible Agency use became a major concern. It was not known whether or not these materials had been destroyed along with the Army's BW stockpiles in response to Presidential Directives of November 1969 and February 1970. The records indicated that the question had been raised and it was the impression of those who were familiar with the project that the material had in fact been destroyed, although no records confirming it could be found. In the course of the investigation, CIA's laboratory storage facilities were searched and about 11 grams (a little less than half an ounce) of shellfish toxin and 8 milligrams of cobra venom were discovered in a little-used vaulted storeroom in an Agency building.

The White House was notified as soon as the existence of the materials became known and was kept informed as the investigation progressed. The Chairmen of CIA's four oversight committees were briefed immediately after the discovery of the toxin. Records and reports were exchanged with the Defense Department as it began its own investigation of the matter. This Committee was notified

of our investigation of the program in mid-June and has been provided all project files and reports of the investigation.

CIA association with Fort Detrick involved the Special Operations Division (SOD) of that facility. This Division was responsible for developing special applications for BW agents and toxins. Its principal customer was the US Army. Its concern was with the development of both suitable agents and delivery mechanisms for use in paramilitary situations. Both standard BW agents and biologically derived toxins were investigated by the Division.

The CIA relationship with SOD was formally established in May 1952 through a memorandum of agreement with the Army Chief Chemical Officer for the performance of certain research and development in the laboratory facilities of the Special Operations Division of the Army Biological Laboratory at Fort Detrick. The initiative for establishing this relationship was a belief that the special capabilities of the Fort Detrick group and its access to biological materials of all sorts provided the Agency access to research and development expertise and capabilities which were appropriate to its function and not otherwise available. The need for such capabilities was tied to earlier Office of Strategic Services World War II experience, which included the development of two different types of agent suicide pills to be used in the event of capture and a successful operation using BW materials to incapacitate a Nazi leader temporarily.

Through the course of years, Agency objectives in the project became better defined. Thus a project approval memo of 1967 identified four

functional categories of project activity.

- a. Maintenance of a stockpile of temporarily incapacitating and lethal agents in readiness for operational use;
- b. assessment and maintenance of biological and chemical disseminating systems for operational use;
- c. adaptation and testing of a non-discernible microbio-inoculator (a dart device for clandestine and imperceptible inoculation with BW/CW agents) for use with various materials and to assure that the microbioinoculator could not be easily detected by later examination of the target, and
- d. provide technical support and consultation on request for offensive and defensive BW/CW.

In the later years the activities dwindled to the point of simply maintaining a stockpile of agents and delivery systems for possible Agency use.

From its outset the project was characterized by extreme compartmentation or a high degree of secrecy within CIA itself. Only two or three Agency officers at any given time were cleared for access to Fort Detrick activities. Though some CIA-originated documents have been found in the project files, it is clear that only a very limited documentation of activities took place.

A major early requirement of the Agency was to find a replacement for the standard cyanide L-Pill issued to agents in hazardous situations during World War II. Work on this problem was done at Fort Detrick and ultimately centered on the coating of a small pin-sized drill with shellfish toxin. In the course of this work shellfish toxin was stored in our laboratory for the purpose of conducting stability tests. A considerable amount of work was done in developing concealment schemes for the drill or pin to be used in the event suicide was necessary. The only application of this effort was in the U-2 flight over the USSR in May 1960, during which Gary Powers carried such a device concealed in a silver dollar. In the Powers' case the grooves of the drill bit were filled with shellfish toxin. He obviously did not use it, and was not instructed to do so; it was offered to him to provide him with the option. The Powers' flight was the only time we are aware that the toxin was provided for operational use, although the L-Pill was made available for earlier flights.

The primary Agency interest was in the development of dissemination devices, to be used with standard chemicals off the shelf. Such dissemination devices as a fountain pen dart launcher and an engine head bolt designed to release a substance when heated appeared to be peculiarly suited for clandestine use. Available records do not indicate that all specific items were developed exclusively for the CIA, as work on similar devices was also done for the Army.

A large amount of Agency attention was given

to the problem of incapacitating guard dogs. Though most of the dart launchers were developed for the Army, the Agency did request the development of a small hand-held dart launcher for its peculiar needs.

Work was also done on temporary human incapacitation techniques. Technical support elements of CIA received continuing requests for safe, effective and rapidly acting, incapacitating devices. These related to a desire to incapacitate captives before they could render themselves incapable of talking or terrorists before they could take retaliatory action. Work was done in trying to develop the dart system for such purposes, but success was never achieved, since a larger amount of an incapacitating agent is required safely to inactivate a human than of a lethal agent required to kill him.

Work was also done by or for the Agency in the development of materials for sabotage of various materials and facilities. This is clearly related to the Agency's mission. Discussions with those involved indicate that hand-launchers with darts loaded with dog incapacitant were delivered for use in Southeast Asia. One such operation involved the penetration of a facility abroad for intelligence collection. The compound was guarded by watch dogs which made entry difficult even when it was empty. Darts were delivered for the operation but were not used. The guard dogs ate some meat treated with dog incapacitant which was offered by the entry team. Our records indicate that some of these materials were prepared for one operation, but we are aware that that operation was not in fact completed. Beyond these, however, no record can be found that these materials or

devices were used for lethal operational purposes.

By the late 1960's, a variety of BW agents and toxins were maintained by SOD for possible Agency use. Varying amounts of these materials ranging from 100 grams (about 3.5 ounces) to 100 milligrams (about 3 thousandths of an ounce) were maintained. Though specific accounting for each agent on the list is not on hand, Department of Defense records indicate that the materials were in fact destroyed in 1970 by SOD personnel, except for the 11 grams of a substance in small medical bottles labelled shellfish toxin, (plus the 8 milligrams of cobra venom) which were found on 20 May of this year.

At the time the toxin was found the officer responsible for the project in 1970 stated he had no recollection as to how it got there. On 30 June, discussions were held with the retired Agency officer who had provided the initial lead. This man, who had been the GS-15 Branch Chief in 1970, stated that the toxin had in fact been moved from Fort Detrick and stored in the laboratory. This was done on the basis of his own decision after conversations with the responsible Project Officer. He further stated that he made this decision based on the fact that the cost and difficulty of isolating the shellfish toxin were so great that it simply made no sense to destroy it, particularly when there would be no future source of the toxin. The current branch chief believes this explanation is correct but still does not recall the actual act of receiving the material from Fort Detrick. Both of these middle-grade officers agree that no one, including their immediate superior, was told

of the retention of the shellfish toxin.

The former branch chief recalls that subsequent to the delivery of the shellfish toxin to CIA, he was told by his chief to inform Fort Detrick personally that destruction of CIA materials should take place. He did so but did not include the shellfish toxin, then in CIA hands, in his instructions.

Discussions with Mr. Helms, Director of Central Intelligence and Mr. Thomas Karamessines, the Deputy Director for Plans in 1970, have established that both were aware of the requirement that such material be disposed of. They recall that clear instructions were given that the CIA stockpile should be destroyed by the Army and that, in accordance with Presidential Directives, the Agency should get out of the BW business.

II.

With the discovery of the shellfish toxin, a complete inventory of the vault in which it was found was taken. The inventory consisted of a stock of various materials and delivery systems accumulated over the years, including other lethal materials, incapacitants, narcotics, hallucinogenic drugs, irritants and riot control agents, herbicides, animal control materials, and many common chemicals. The small size of the vault, about 8 by 10 feet, and the few shelves limit the extent of this stockpile. The materials are for the most part the residue of a number of different CIA programs. These involved CIA's effort to keep a close watch on emerging technology -- in this case pharmaceutical technology -- to insure that we did not encounter an unanticipated threat

from hostile intelligence services with which we could not contend. We also wished to capitalize on new advances which should substantially assist us in our efforts to collect foreign intelligence or in a wartime situation. The narcotics in storage related to CIA's overseas efforts to collect intelligence on the narcotics trade, to help in countering it. We have also supplied tear gas and mace to our officers overseas for use in defensive situations where firearms would not be appropriate.

The threat as well as the promise posed by newer types of drugs, particularly the hallucinogenic drugs, made at least exploratory research on them essential. You will recall our concern over the possible role of drugs in the apparent brainwashing of American POW's in Korea, and the haunted eyes of Cardinal Mindzenty as he "confessed" at a Communist trial. I might add that we believe that a drug was administered to one of our officers overseas by a foreign intelligence service within the past year. Those responsible for providing technical support to clandestine operations felt it necessary that they understand the ways in which these drugs could be used, their effects and their vulnerabilities to countermeasures. In pursuing such concerns as these, many different materials were obtained and stored for provision to contractors who did the actual scientific research involved. This concern also led to the experiments which led to the unfortunate death in 1953 of Mr. Frank Olson.

In this regard, CIA does very little in-house research. Our laboratories are limited and are principally used to test developed equipment and to tailor it for specific operational uses through

concealment or special packaging. We do not have, nor have we had, the facilities to produce or experiment with such lethal materials as the shellfish toxin. For example, we relied upon Fort Detrick to perform the actual work of coating pins or darts with toxin or with dog incapacitant. In similar fashion, we relied on other laboratories or contractors to support us in other fields. Most of the materials held in storage in the vault were kept there for possible issuance to contractors engaged in various kinds of research.

III.

One of the major results of these investigations of the CIA has been to impress upon our employees and all of us involved in intelligence the fact that decisions about our programs must be made in the light of today's world. As you are aware, in mid 1973 we tried to identify all questionable activities. We did so for what I believe to be most of them, and issued internal directives to ensure that CIA remain within the bounds of law. Repeated emphasis on the importance of this did lead to the identification of our association with Fort Detrick as an activity to be reviewed before we were aware that one of its products had been improperly sequestered.

The controls involved in the shellfish case seem to have existed but not to have been applied. The controls that would have prevented or discovered this act were principally those which are the kind of management we must have for the intelligence business. I am confident that this management will exist as a result of the changes we are making in our approach to intelligence, to ensure its conformity with American values

and standards. These will include a better public appreciation of modern intelligence, better guidelines for its proper activities and better supervision externally to stimulate better supervision internally. With these, I am confident that such episodes as the shellfish toxin will not be repeated.